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Mr. MELLER'S
ELECTION SERMON.

MAY 31, 1797.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

IN SENATE, MAY 31st, 1797.

ORDERED, That PELEG COFFIN, THOMAS DAWES and ISAAC THOMPSON, Esq's. be a Committee to wait upon the Rev. Mr. MELLEN, and, in the name of the Senate, to thank him for the SERMON delivered by him, this day, before His Excellency the Governor, His Honor the Lieutenant Governor, the Honorable Council, and the two Branches of the General Court, and request a copy for the prefs.

True copy of Record,

EDWARD McLANE, Clerk of the Senate.



A
S E R M O N,

DELIVERED BEFORE

His Excellency the GOVERNOR,

AND

The Honourable LEGISLATURE,

OF THE

COMMONWEALTH of MASSACHUSETTS,

ON THE

Annual Election.

MAY 31, 1797.

BY JOHN MELLEN, JUN.
ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF *Barnstable*.

PRINTED AT BOSTON,
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1797.





AN
ELECTION SERMON.

1st. PETER, 2d.—xv.

OR SO IS THE WILL OF GOD, THAT WITH WELL DOING YE
MAY PUT TO SILENCE THE IGNORANCE OF FOOLISH MEN."

THIS declaration of the apostle, directed to
Christians, and designed, to instruct and caution them,
while under the government of heathen rulers, may, it
is presumed, without impropriety, be recommended to
the consideration both of rulers and ruled, now that
Christianity is their common religion. As the circum-
stance no longer exists, which directed the observations
and counsels of the apostles, relative to civil govern-
ment, principally to subjects and their duties; and as
being misrepresented by ignorance, and slandered by
many are evils to which subjects are by no means ex-
posed alone, may I not well be justified in giving to the
text such a latitude of application, as has been sug-
gested?

A VIEW of the words in their connexion, may lead
to some previous observations on the ORIGIN and DE-
VELOPMENT of CIVIL GOVERNMENT, and the aspect of CHRIS-
TIANITY upon it.

"SUBMIT

“SUBMIT yourselves, saith the apostle, to every ordinance of man, for the LORD's sake : whether it be to the king as supreme ; or unto governours, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For this is the will of GOD, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

IT is of little importance whether we allow, to the first quoted words, the construction which our translation gives them, or, with some learned divines, instead of *every ordinance of man*, read *every human creature* that is, every person in authority ; civil rulers of every rank and description. If civil government be considered by this apostle, as an ordinance of man, he does not in thus representing it, contradict another apostle who says, “ the powers that be are ordained of GOD.” HE has ordained them, because they are agreeable to the constitution of the world, which he has established. It is evidently his will that civil government should exist, because he is a GOD of order and not of confusion ; because the nature of mankind, their social disposition, their wants, their passions, their irregularities and their vices clearly indicate its expediency and importance. We are by no means obliged to conclude, from his command, to be in subjection to the existing power *because they are ordained of GOD* : or to submit to every person in civil authority, of whatever name, rank or degree of power, *for the LORD's sake*, that all rulers derive their authority immediately from GOD. We may not infer that he has so pointed out the particular manner in which we should be governed, or the degree of power which every ruler ought to possess, that civil go

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Government, as to its form, and mode of administration, may not be properly styled *an ordinance of man*.

GOVERNMENT has its remote origin in the nature of mankind: Or, the ruler's power is indirectly derived from HIM who is the author of that nature. Its immediate origin, as relative to particular nations and communities of men, has been far from uniform. The only proper source of the ruler's power, at least, when extended farther than that of a parent over his family, is, under God, the people or community, who are the subjects of his government. We believe that the people only have the right to determine the nature and form of their political constitution. But we readily allow that facts are, in many instances, at variance with right; and that the theory which supposes the obligation to civil obedience derived from an original social compact, is not universally, or in general, supported by the history of nations. Many, if not most of the governments now existing in the world, probably originated in conquest. Or, however their foundations were at first laid, they have, through various changes, been matured to what they now are. And it is far from true, that their present forms are the result of a general compact among the people, or are a just expression of their will, unless their submission to them be considered as implicit consent. The instance of a numerous people, unawed by any foreign power, uncontrolled by any internal oppressor, calmly collecting the wisdom and the will of the whole community; coolly examining first principles; freely discussing and declaring their natural rights, and on such a firm and rational basis, deliberately erecting a constitution of government for themselves,

selfes, is a spectacle not less singular than august, even in modern, more enlightened times. Nor will it, I trust, be considered as favouring of national pride, rather than as expressive of just gratitude to heaven, if I add that to no instance among the few which modern times have exhibited, claiming any title to the above description, is it so fully applicable, as to that of our own highly favoured country.

As to the design or final cause of government, we feel no more doubt than with regard to its legitimate origin, or the proper source of the ruler's power. That is the general good of the people, as this is their general will. I should blush for my country, or for myself, did I hesitate to say, that we are agreed in exploding the absurd idea of the many being made for the few, and of rulers, as such, not living for the people, rather than the people for them : or did I suppose that it could be felt as any disparagement by the latter, to be styled the servants of the public. Their usefulness is their honour; and they are great in proportion as they minister to the general good. This, however, does by no means suggest that a consciousness of their being benefactors, ought to be their only reward.—While acting in character, they merit not only the esteem and respect of the people, but have a right to find their own interests promoted by their exertions for the benefit of others. If they are servants, they are by no means slaves. They are not bound to give their labors to the public, without an honourable compensation; though in common with others, they ought to be under the influence of those sublime principles of patriotism and religion, which may induce them, when peculiar
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occasion calls, to make such sacrifices for their country's welfare; as nothing but the gratitude and affection of their country can repay.

THIS representation of the design of government and the ruler's power is not less agreeable to scripture, than it is to enlightened reason; and is indeed, suggested by the apostle in the words preceding the text. He speaks of governors as sent "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." The office of the ruler or magistrate is not less honorable or necessary because a part, and no small part, of the good which it produces is of the negative kind, or consists in preventing evil. And if the punishing or preventing of evil seem, according to the apostle's representation, to be the object of government and its laws, rather than recompensing such as do well: or we be ready to ask why praise is the only recompense allotted to well-doing, while punishment is the portion of those who do evil; we shall nevertheless find his manner of expression sufficiently accurate, if we consider that well-doing, in the sense here made use of, is its own reward. He who carefully observes the laws of society; who is just, faithful, sober and temperate, and wisely pursues the path of honest industry, finds his advantage in so doing, without any direct reward from the government under which he lives. Virtue tends to happiness. Such is the constitution of heaven. This tendency, indeed, is often counteracted by the follies and vices of men. A virtuous individual might be happy in the state of nature; at least he might be free from those evils and injuries against which government is calculated to protect him, if all around were as innocent and

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virtuous

virtuous as he. The primary design of government, therefore is, not so much to render the subjects of it positively happy, as to prevent their being rendered miserable by the violence, injustice, fraud or negligence of their fellow men. This appears to be in perfect conformity to the apostle PAUL's ideas, when he exhorts that "supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, *that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.*"

It is to be observed, however, that all laws are not of the penal kind, or designed to deter from the commission of crimes. Some propose rewards. Their immediate object is to encourage exertions, in a particular line, calculated to promote the general good. And many others, though neither directly penal, nor of the kind last mentioned, are professedly designed to increase the public emolument, strength and prosperity, while they secure the peace and liberty of virtuous individuals. In a word, civil government, when wisely and faithfully administered, is as really calculated as it is designed to improve the condition of mankind, and to widen the sphere of their enjoyments, as well as to regulate and protect them. A very extensive sense may, therefore, be justly given to the Apostle's expression, when speaking of the civil ruler: "He is the minister of God to thee for good."

No man who impartially reads the exhortations of ST. PETER in the context, with those of ST. PAUL in his epistle to the Romans, and in his charge to TITUS, relative to civil obedience and subjection; and recollects the language of our SAVIOUR, on which his conduct

was so just a comment, with reference to the same subject, can refuse to acknowledge that the Christian religion sufficiently inculcates submission to government, and looks with a very friendly aspect on civil order and subordination.

INDEED, so strongly and with so little limitation has christianity enjoined submission to the ruling powers, as to give some degree of plausibility to the charge of its being unfriendly to the liberty of the subject, and the unalienable rights of men. The doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, so favourable to the selfish views and ambition of tyrants, and so degrading to the human character in general, has presumed to derive its origin from this religion, or at least, with confidence appealed to it for support. It is presumed, however, that the expressions in the New Testament, which seem most to favour the beloved doctrine of tyrants, may be fairly explained and accounted for, in such a manner that they will appear to give no real countenance to such a doctrine; and further, that upon an impartial view of the Christian religion, we shall find abundant reason to acknowledge that it is most friendly to rational liberty, and that the spirit of it is most congenial to that of free governments.

THERE is good reason for supposing that the exhortations of the Apostles, recommending quiet submission to the ruling powers, were occasioned, especially by, and had a particular reference to a prejudice which then existed in the minds of the Gentiles, and was taken advantage of by the Jews, against the Christians, as though they were enemies to all government, and thought themselves on account of their relation to CHRIST, freed

freed from all subjection to any earthly power. This prejudice probably arose from confounding Christians with Jews ; and knowing that principles of a very seditious nature, criminal to the Roman, and indeed to all civil government, were really held by a sect among the latter, originated by JUDAS of Galilee, and on that account, called, Galileans, a name which, by the Heathens, was indiscriminately given to the Christians, in the early days of our religion.

As the principle attributed, though unjustly, to the Christians, or at least to Christianity, was so subversive of all order and government, it was of great importance that they should carefully guard against every thing in their language and conduct, which might tend, in the least to justify their enemies in fixing it upon them. This may well account for the Apostle's urging obedience to the ruling powers, in terms so strong and absolute ; and explains their giving the following or a similar reason for their thus pressing it upon their Christian brethren,—“ That the word of God be not blasphemed.” It shews also, that their object was not to define the limits of submission, but to evince the obligation to submission in general. Can it then be fairly inferred from any thing which they have written, that our religion may be justly charged with being unfriendly to liberty, or giving any countenance to oppressive and tyrannical government ? Would the charge be just, though we should allow that it was the design of the Apostles to recommend to their Christian brethren, in existing circumstances, an unreserved obedience to the ruling powers ; not merely to such as were good and just, but to all without exception, to the rulers of that day,

day, who, it is well known, were sufficiently despotic and oppressive ? Certain it is, that had they undertaken to qualify the obedience of the subject, the end of their exhortations would have been frustrated ; for they would by no means have vindicated themselves, in the eyes of the government, from the scandal to which they were exposed.

I AM sensible that our religion has been thought sufficiently defensible against the imputation of teaching the slavish doctrine of unlimited obedience and passive submission, upon the idea that the sacred writers, when they inculcate subjection, in the strongest and most unqualified terms, still discover, by the arguments which they make use of to enforce it, that they consider government and ruling powers as what they ought to be, not regarding what they really were : That they urge obedience upon the principle that the civil magistrate is the minister of God for good, unto the people, and therefore that their obligation to obedience cannot be transferred, when he ceases to maintain this character, and becomes their scourge and oppressor. But if this construction of the apostolic writings, and particularly of St. PAUL's reasoning in the 13th chapter of *Romans*, be just, which, however, is not undisputed, there appears to be no occasion for having recourse to it.

NEVERTHELESS, though it is allowed that christianity does not profess to define the respective powers and rights of rulers and subjects, it is still contended that the spirit of it is most congenial to that of free governments, and evidently favourable to rational liberty.

WE readily assent to our Saviour's declaration, when he said, " my kingdom is not of this world." His immediate object was to improve the hearts, and mend the morals of mankind : To reconcile them to the Deity, and thus train them up as subjects of a spiritual and eternal kingdom. This object however, is in perfect consistency with that of rendering them wiser, better and happier, in every earthly relation, and of promoting the present welfare, both of individuals and societies. It is manifestly, the tendency, and we need not hesitate to consider it as the design, of his religion, to render men better citizens of the world as well as to make them meet for an heavenly inheritance ; to give them more just ideas of, and dispose them more faithfully to discharge, their respective duties, whatever their rank, station or condition in life. It is, doubtless, agreeable to his will, and in perfect conformity to the design of his spiritual kingdom, that mankind should avail themselves of every instruction which may be deduced from his religion, for securing liberty, peace and prosperity, and enhancing those advantages which are derived from civil government, and the laws of society.

THE spirit of Christianity ought to be carried into the administration of every kind of government, and to regulate the conduct of all classes of men, from the highest to the lowest, but it does not thence follow that the genius and principles of some kinds of government are not more nearly allied to the spirit of this religion than others ; or that it does not point to the election of one form, rather than another. And if there be any one form on which it looks with peculiar approbation, can we hesitate to say, it is the REPUBLICAN.

WHEN our Saviour said to his disciples, "All ye are brethren," did he not recognize or clearly countenance that fundamental principle of republicanism, the natural equality of men. I mean an equality with regard to certain natural and inherent rights; the only one which reason can successfully undertake to defend, and which is in perfect consistency with that difference and almost endless variety which is found among them, with respect to original capacity, aptitude to govern, education, riches, and influence derived from any of these sources, or from all combined.

It was not necessary that the author of our religion should more fully avow that important maxim of all free government, that rulers are invested with power not principally, for their own sakes, but for the good of the community; or that he should more clearly discountenance the idea of hereditary power, and greatness derived from titles and distinctions, not founded on merit, than he did, when he said to his followers, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but so it shall not be among you: But whosoever would be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

He did not say, reject those kinds of government which cherish sentiments tending to depress, and hold in vassalage the great mass of the people; in which numbers of the community live in idleness and luxury, upon the labours of the rest, and enjoy privileges and exemptions, greatly oppressive to the degraded multitude: But he said by his Apostles, "Be ye, all of you subject

subject one to another—Bear ye one another's burdens—And, serve one another in love." And he discovered in a striking manner, an impartial concern for all his brethren, when represented as saying, "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these, ye did it unto me."

HE has not said that governments, in order to their being free, must be elective; that all the members of the community are entitled to a voice, mediately or immediately, in choosing their rulers, and making the laws by which they are governed; or to a degree of weight in the general scale. But he has, by his Apostle, commanded us to honour all men; and has compared the Christian society to the human body; representing all the members of it as connected with, and mutually dependent on each other; so that "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." We are taught that "God hath tempered the body together, so that there should be no schism therein, but that the members should have the same care one of another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

THE Apostle enjoins obedience and fidelity to their own masters, on all in a state of servitude; but adds, "if thou mayest be free, choose it rather," that we might not be left in doubt, which of those two states had the preference in his mind.

IF it be thought of peculiar importance, in order to determine what kind of government is most agreeable to the spirit and principles of Christianity, to enquire what form the Author of it instituted in his church:

church ; may I be permitted, without seeming to wander too far from the present occasion, or to enter too deeply into a disputed question, to observe, concisely—that if we except what may be called Theocratic in this government, particularly the appointment of its first officers, by CHRIST himself, and the extraordinary powers with which these officers were invested, for the purpose of successfully propagating a religion, so strongly opposed by the lusts, passions and prejudices of the world : If we attend to the direct evidence which we have from the New Testament, that one species of officers was elected by the brethren: If we consider that the Apostles do not appear to have had any proper successors, the end of their office being answered in the witness which they gave to the resurrection of CHRIST, and the foundation which they laid for transmitting his religion to future generations: If we recollect that, by Apostolic direction, censure was to be inflicted on an offending brother, in an assembly of the whole church ; that no brother was forbidden to speak and exhort in their religious assemblies ; and, to mention no more, that there was, for a time, a community of goods, among the early Christians—the conclusion appears to be just and obvious, that, so far as CHRIST has instituted any particular kind of lasting government for his church ; and so far as this is pointed out to us, by the authority or example of the New Testament writers, it partakes largely and most strongly of the REPUBLICAN and ELECTIVE form.

I ONLY add, that the friendly aspect of our religion on the cause of liberty in general, and of consequence, on the most free governments, is clearly visible in the
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tenor and tendency of its precepts, which is to promote, not only the divine, but all the benevolent and social virtues ; to cherish that charity which worketh no ill to his neighbour, and to deter men from every act of injustice, treachery or unkindness, whereby the rights and liberties of any of their brethren might be violated ; in the exhortations which are given to christians, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith they are made free ; not to be the servants of men ; not to call any man master on earth ; not to affect being called Rabbi, and not to exercise lordly dominion over each other.

PERHAPS I ought to apologise for dwelling so long upon a point, on which this respectable audience may be supposed to have felt themselves previously agreed. It is hoped, however, that an attempt to illustrate the indirect testimony which the best of religions furnishes, in favour of our own constitutions of government, will not be deemed an improper one, by the friends, either of republicanism or christianity.

WHAT has been already said, is I trust, more than sufficient to explain the occasion of the apostles words, in the text, and their meaning as they relate to that occasion. This appears to be, that it was the will of God, with respect to the christians to whom he wrote, that they should with due subjection to the civil powers, silence the ignorance of foolish men ; or the objections and complaints of all, who, through prejudice, or want of acquaintance with them, and their religion, accused them of principles or practices unfriendly to government. Such subjection, we have reason to conclude, was the *well doing* especially intended. But taking the words in a more general sense, though still as relating

to government, and the duties connected with it, may they not, with propriety, be recommended to the attention both of rulers and subjects, especially at a time when party spirit is so prevalent, that not a few of both find themselves exposed to censures which they ought not to deserve, and which they must naturally wish to silence?

BUT it may be asked, will not ignorance and folly be forever clamorous? Must not he who attempts to silence them, undertake an helpless task? Can it be the will of God that we should perform impossibilities? Is it not enough that we should be required to prevent or silence the complaints of the candid and judicious? To the following construction, which is presumed to be the true one, there can be no difficulty in assenting: That it is the duty of all to endeavour, by well doing, in their respective stations and relations, to prevent every just ground of complaint against them; and to conduct in such a manner as will have the most probable tendency to put to silence even the ignorant and foolish.

PERMIT me now to suggest, that if rulers would conform to the will of God, and the spirit of what is recommended in the text, they will feel themselves obliged, practically to remember the origin of government, and the source of their authority and power. If they duly consider that civil government is the ordinance of God, they will view themselves as his ministers, and charged with an important commission from him who "standeth in the congregation of the mighty, and judgeth among the Gods." They will feel an elevation calculated, not to foster pride, but to inspire noble sentiments, and the most generous and laudable kind of ambition; and cherish

ish that self respect which will render them cautious and circumspect in their deportment, and fearful of sinking the dignity of the ruler in the vices or follies of the man. They will remember the character of him whose ministers and representatives they are ; they will take heed that they do not, by unfaithfulness, negligence, selfishness, or any baseness of behaviour, misrepresent and dishonor HIM who has put such honor upon them ; and carefully endeavour to manifest unto all who witness their administration, that they know him who exerciseth loving kindness, and judgment and righteousness, in the earth. They will not forget that being raised above their brethren, in authority, does not render them less accountable to HIM who is the judge of all the earth ; but rather, will be seriously impressed with the interesting importance of that divine maxim, unto whom much is given, of him will much be required.

REMEMBERING also that their power is not derived immediately from GOD, but through the intervention of those, over whom their power is extended, they will feel the propriety and importance of respecting the people, as well as themselves. This caution is usually applicable to rulers, in all kinds of government, even the most despotic : For, in all " the physical strength resides in the governed ; and this strength wants only to be felt and roused, to lay prostrate the most ancient and confirmed dominion." But especially may it be recommended to republican rulers, whose authority, while in common with that of others it derives its support from public opinion, is more sensibly and immediately dependent on the suffrages and general will of the governed. We reprobate the inconsistent idea of power, delegated

legated to the rulers, remaining, at the same time, in the hands of the people: Yet, in governments like ours, where all delegated power may be said, by means of frequent elections, to return, after short intervals, to those who gave it; and their right to change even the constitution, when the public good may require, is clearly acknowledged, there appears to be a peculiar propriety in rulers treating the general opinion, and feelings of the people, with delicacy and respect. And this, not merely for their own advantage, and with a view to the more certain enjoyment of the public confidence and affection, but also from a patriotic regard to the general welfare and tranquillity; that the people may not be furnished with a plea for attempting, or wishing, frequently, to shake foundations, and make injudicious or dangerous changes in the constitution.

It is a dictate of sound policy, as well as of christian morality, that we should, not only endeavor to do that which is right and good, but, if possible, to do it in such a manner *that our good may not be evil spoken of*. It is, by no means, inconsistent with that firmness, and resolute adherence to what appears to be right, which characterizes a good ruler, to aim, habitually, at *providing things honest in the sight of men*; and to strive by *manifestation of the truth, to commend himself to every man's conscience, in the sight of God*.

AGAIN, if rulers do what is in their power to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, they will practically remember the DESIGN OF GOVERNMENT, or the end for which they are invested with authority. In the whole of their administration, they will direct their aim, and point

point their endeavours to the general good. Whatever sphere they move in the system of government, this will be the centre towards which their views and actions will tend. They will divest themselves, as much as possible of selfish, of local, and of party prejudices. If they are legislators, they will, in making laws, ever consult the good of the whole community. And though it may be often proper to make such, as are designed to benefit, more immediately, a part, yet they will consent to none, which, in their view, will operate injuriously with respect to the whole. And if their office be to execute the laws, they will be guided by the same principle. They will view all classes and conditions of men with an equal eye. They will not employ their power and influence to oppress the poor, in judgment; or screen the guilty from deserved punishment, on account of their riches or honors. They will not bear the sword in vain, by neglecting the duties required of them; or from sinister motives, overlooking crimes which they ought to punish; but in such a manner as to be a terror to evil doers, while they are a praise to them who do well.

FURTHER, if rulers would, as much as possible, secure themselves from censure, by conforming to the will of God, it highly concerns them to consider the influence of religion upon the present happiness of mankind. Upon the acknowledged principle, that religion, if not absolutely necessary to the existence, is greatly conducive to the order, peace and welfare of civil society, they will feel themselves bound to make all that provision for disseminating the knowledge, and enforcing the practice of it, among the people, which is consistent with the rights of conscience; rights which they will
ever

ever hold sacred, and never presume to violate, even with a view to promoting what they may esteem the greatest good of the community; sensible that they, equally with others, are bound by the prohibition, *not to do evil that good may come*. They will, upon the same principle, and under the conviction, that it does not appertain to them to decree articles of faith or modes of worship, protect all denominations in the peaceable exercise of their religion, and in worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences. Consistently, however, with the above mentioned conviction; and that such protection may be effectually granted, they will, not only feel themselves at liberty, but under obligation to restrain the licentiousness of those, who, regardless of all religious institutions, would throw down the barriers, designed to separate from others, that day which is peculiarly devoted to the public worship of God.

THE ruler's respect for religion may, and ought to be discovered also by distinguishing those who appear to reverence its laws, in the distribution of public offices; so far, at least, as a due regard to other qualifications will permit. If they would silence the ignorance of the foolish, or give no occasion to the judicious and well disposed to censure their conduct, they will follow the direction given to the Israelites, respecting the choice of their rulers and judges—provide *such as fear God*, as well as *able men*, and *haters of covetousness*. Their eyes will be upon the faithful of the land, to honor and promote them; nor will they suffer considerations of friendship, affinity, or self interest to outweigh those of personal character.

BUT

BUT there is yet another way in which their regard for religion may be most effectually expressed, and this is, exhibiting in their own characters, that which it is their duty to honour in others. It is possible that men may respect religion in others, who do not habitually feel its influence themselves ; at least, they may occasionally distinguish and honor it, when their own authority, interest, or favorite schemes may be promoted by so doing. It would, however, be with faint hopes of success, should we recommend to men destitute of religious principle, the making of such principle an object in the appointment of others to places of power and trust. And indeed, with respect to their own fidelity, and uniform attention to the duties of their office, we cannot feel that confidence in men, who profess not to be governed by higher motives than those of honour, civil virtue or regard to reputation, which we cheerfully repose in such as give us the additional security, which is derived from those sublime principles by which religion, and especially the christian religion, awes, controuls, directs and animates its votaries.

IN connexion with what has been now said, it is natural to observe, that if rulers would hope to avoid, not merely the clamours of ignorance and folly, but the frowns of knowledge and virtue, they must be exemplary in their own respect for, and obedience to those laws by which they are instrumental in binding their brethren. If they treat their own institutions with practical contempt, they will be justly chargeable with the absurdity of pulling down with one hand, what they build with the other. It is of as real importance that they should govern, as that the ministers of religion should instruct and persuade, by example.

THE inquiry, how the subjects of government ought to conduct, that they may comply with the spirit of the instruction given in the text, now demands our attention. The sum of the answer we may find in the words immediately following. "As free, and not using your liberty as a cloke of malicioufness, but as the servants of God."

As HIS servants, it becometh them to remember that submission to government is a duty, than which scarcely any one appears to be more clearly enjoined by HIM. Reason teaches us that whatever tends to promote the happiness of mankind, is agreeable to the benevolent author of our beings. For the necessity, importance and salutary tendency of government, of laws and magistrates, to be a terror to evil doers, and a protection, as well as praise to them that do well, we need not appeal merely to the feelings of those who have suffered in their persons, their property or their connexions, by the audacious wickedness of the high-way robber, or the insidious, and even more alarming villany of the midnight thief, incendiary and assassin. On this point general experience abundantly confirms the decision of reason. The conclusion is obvious. The voice of revelation, also, is clear and decisive upon our obligation to civil obedience: So clear, that we may safely pronounce real enemies to government, to civil order and subordination, practical enemies, at least, to our holy religion. Whatever they may be in name, they are not christians in spirit and in truth. To declare any one, an enemy to government in general, is therefore a high and grievous charge. It may be, and, no doubt, often is misapplied. This may be the language

of ignorance, of folly, of prejudice or malice, as well as the complaints which are too often uttered against those by whom government is administered. Nothing which sober reason dictates, or which CHRIST, or his apostles have taught, on this subject, furnishes any just ground for the pretence, that resistance to the ruling powers is, in all cases, contrary to the will of GOD, and the spirit of our religion : Much less, that all disapprobation of, or speaking against the measures of those in authority, is criminal. We have not so learned CHRIST, nor the principles of civil subjection. In this respect we may, and ought to conduct as free. But if we would do what we ought to prevent or silence complaints, with regard to the use which we make of our liberty, we must consider the ill consequences of a groundless diminution of the public confidence, in our civil rulers. We must remember that although they may not introduce more of mystery into their administration, than particular circumstances, or the general nature of government may require, yet we are not capable of knowing, in all cases, at least, immediately, the motives which influence their conduct. Their means of information are more perfect, and their field of vision more extensive than those of private individuals. These considerations will dictate candour and tenderness, in the judgments which we form of their public conduct, in those instances which appear most doubtful, or liable to suspicion ; and are calculated to produce a habit of manly and generous, though not of blind and implicit confidence, in the uprightness of their views, and the wisdom of their measures. The same considerations should also inspire us with the truly patriotic resolution,

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of standing forth in the defence of our rulers, when we conceive them to have done well, and their measures to be unjustly attacked ; and induce us, by enlightening, according to our ability, the ignorant, to silence, if possible, their groundless complaints. Permit me to observe, that such a kind of confidence, as has been recommended, may, with peculiar justice, be expected of the subjects of such a government as our own, in which all the rulers are, either directly or indirectly, appointed by the people : Since, in censuring them we do, in some measure, cast a reflection on our own, or at least, the public wisdom or integrity.

WHILE we hold fast the liberty of private judgment, and assert our right to investigate and discuss the measures of government, if we would give no just occasion of offence, we shall exercise this right with prudence and decency. We shall appeal to dispassionate reason and argument ; and not have recourse to reviling, scurrility and abuse. Those do but injure a good cause, while they render a doubtful one, still more suspicious. Need I add, that falsehood and deception, however they may be viewed by the optics of corrupt policy, or violent party zeal, are a kind of weapons which will be rejected with abhorrence, by every true friend of liberty, of government, and his country.

THE man to whom this character belongs, whatever his sentiments may be on disputed political questions, will, we may expect, quietly yield up private opinion to that of the public, as expressed by the constituted organs of the general voice ; so far at least, as to submit, without difficulty or opposition, to its established effects. He will rejoice in the prosperity of his country, whether

er it were produced by the means which he preferred or not. And with respect to measures which involve only the question of expediency, not that of justice and right, will feel willing that events should determine their wisdom or impropriety.

I ONLY observe further, that a due regard to the will of God, and the peace, order and welfare of society, will deter him from imputing to those who differ from him, in some of their sentiments, on public measures, worse motives and intentions than their conduct clearly indicates; and from exasperating the spirit of party, when already too violent for the health of the political body.

FROM what has been said of the friendly aspect of the christian religion on civil liberty, and the congeniality of its spirit to that of the most free governments, we may infer, that as conformity to its principles and obedience to its precepts prevail, the rights of men will be more thoroughly understood, and more sacredly regarded.

AND may we not view it, at least, as probable, that the extension of republican principles and forms of government will accompany that spreading of the gospel, in its power and purity, which the scripture prophecies represent as constituting the glory of the latter days? The surprising changes and revolutions which have taken, and are taking place in *Europe*, loudly pronounce the present an eventful period. Whether they be not the wheels, in the grand machinery of providence, which are to have a distinguished efficiency in hastening the fulfilment of ancient predictions, relative to the downfall of anti-christian and tyrannical power, and thus introducing the reign of truth, of peace, and

and equal liberty, is an inquiry which may well arrest the attention of every serious and enlightened believer in revelation.

NOR am I deterred from offering the above suggestion, by reflecting that the great and formidable Republic, which makes so conspicuous a figure on the bloody theatre, has, in the midst of revolutionary violence, and their zeal for destroying the corrupt appendages of the christian religion, made war upon christianity itself: Nor by a review of those attendant enormities, from which humanity ever must, and, as we have reason to hope, the nation among whom they were perpetrated now generally does, turn away with abhorrence: Nor by any thing which may be justly thought equivocal, or alarming in their present designs or conduct, relative to us, or to surrounding nations.

To the prevalence of infidelity, and an unparalleled prostration of christian principles and institutions, may be justly attributed, in no small degree, those shocking evils which tarnished the glory of their wonderful revolution. Nor let us hastily conclude that the strange and impious attempts to banish christianity, in the days of anarchy and confusion, will prove effectual to hold it in lasting exile;—or prevent its return, in an improved and more rational form, to bless the reign of order, peace and settled government. Besides, we acknowledge that the power and wisdom of the Deity are often exercised in bringing good out of evil. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, carrieth headlong the counsel of the froward, and bringeth about the most important events, by the means which they make use of to defeat them. We remember how the enemies of CHRIST flattered

flattered themselves that they had effectually crushed his power and cause, when they accomplished his death, though that very event was the corner stone on which his kingdom was erected. We recollect that the Assyrian monarch is called *the rod of God's anger*; and that the righteous designs of the Almighty Ruler were carried into effect through his instrumentality, though *he meant not so, neither did his heart think so; but it was in his heart to destroy and cut off nations, not a few.* And we assent to the scripture declaration: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

REFLECTING on the legitimate origin, and design of civil government, what abundant reason have we to felicitate ourselves on being the inhabitants of a country, in which the former is so clearly, and practically recognized, and the latter so rationally and happily pursued! It is our happy lot to live under civil constitutions "which unite, and by their union establish, liberty with order;" the latter of which is not less essential to our permanent welfare, than liberty itself. We are citizens not merely of a single COMMONWEALTH, but also, of a FEDERAL REPUBLIC, which unites, for general defence, and many important purposes, under one common head, a number of distinct States, possessed of qualified sovereignty, spread over an extensive country; and thus, without endangering freedom, or giving up any thing essential to the republican form of government, in a great measure, if not entirely, obviates the often repeated objection against this form, as being compatible only to a small extent of territory.

NOR are our religious rights less firmly secured to us than our civil. Not by legal establishments. Not by
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any other alliance between the church and state, than what consists in that rational respect which each entertains for the other, founded on a conviction of the importance, both of religion and government, to the happiness of society. While religion, and the christian religion is countenanced, if not directly patronized by the ruling powers, every man is at liberty to worship God in the manner which his conscience dictates to be right. The citizens of the UNITED STATES are highly favoured, in as much as they are not shackled in their inquiries, by the baneful influence of a powerful and bigoted hierarchy, on the one hand ; nor, with pleasing confidence, I add, taught by general infidelity and irreligion, in their civil rulers, to slight the institutions of Christianity, or to neglect the support, or despise the instructions of their spiritual teachers, on the other.

THAT the great body of the people are possessed of an uncommon degree of valuable knowledge, compared with most, if not all other nations, with whom we are acquainted ; that the arts and sciences are flourishing ; that the means of education are improving, as well as increasing, and that religion is generally respected, amongst us, are considerations which tend to confirm the pleasing hope, that the TEMPLE OF LIBERTY which has been erected in this Western world, will be as renowned for its duration, as it is for the harmony of its proportions, and the simple elegance of its structure.

WERE we to take a review, (which however, the time will not permit,) of the various scenes through which we have passed, in our progress from a state of dependence on a distant power, whose impolitic measures for
securing

securing, more firmly, our subjection, were the means of losing it entirely, to our present state of independence, prosperity, wealth and respectability, the recollection might well excite a throng of emotions in our breasts, among which, gratitude to heaven would justly claim the preeminence. For it was not our own arm that saved us; but the right hand of the LORD, and his arm, and the light of his countenance. This pious affection, however by no means forbids, and, I trust, will not exclude the gratitude so justly due to those patriotic warriors and statesmen, whom heaven has honoured, in making them important instruments of our political salvation and national prosperity. Among this band of worthies, it would be unnatural and unjust, not to distinguish the late illustrious President of the United States. Viewing him both in his military and civil character, and tracing him through the whole course of his patriotic and benevolent labours, who will deny that he has well done, and deserved most highly of his country? May that retirement, to which he has been followed by an unparalleled share of the public applause, esteem and gratitude, be as happy as it is dignified; and the evening of his life as peaceful and serene, as its day has been active and useful!

WHILE we cheerfully pay this tribute of respect to the distinguished merits of the retired President, we disclaim the idea, of our political salvation or prosperity depending on the name or the virtues of a single citizen, however illustrious. Let the well known abilities, the extensive political knowledge, the integrity and patriotism of that highly respectable character, who now fills the first seat in our national government, be our justification

ification in so doing. And let the general satisfaction with which the result of a late interesting election was received; and the confidence, and spirit of conciliation with which both the first and second in command, appear to be viewed by the people at large, suffice to falsify the gloomy predictions, and disappoint the fears and hopes of such as have, either kindly trembled for our safety, or viewed with a jealous eye, our rising greatness and respectability.

AMONG the public causes of joy and gratitude, it is far from the least, that we have been enabled to realize the invaluable blessing of peace, while other nations, with whom we are connected, have so severely experienced the calamities of war. Our joy has, however, lately felt a check, and a cloud has, in a degree, obscured the face of our national prosperity, in consequence of the misunderstanding which has taken place, between our government and the Republic of France. Nevertheless, we trust that those ties which bind the two nations to each other, will not be lightly broken by either; and that both understand their honour and interest too well, to widen, rather than attempt healing the unhappy breach. With respect to our own government, we feel full confidence that, from a conviction of the undiminished value of peace, and a due regard to the dictates of general benevolence, they will be induced, before an appeal is made to the sword, to pursue the expedient of negotiation, as far as national dignity will permit: Farther than this, it is presumed, no citizen of independent America will wish them to go; or patiently bear the humiliating idea of being controuled, or dictated to, by any foreign nation whatever.

THE aged and venerable chief Magistrate of this Commonwealth,* now that he is retiring from the chair of government, to which he has been repeatedly raised by his fellow-citizens, who have thus clearly expressed their grateful sense of his past exertions, in the cause of freedom and his country, will be pleased to accept our warmest wishes for his health and happiness; That peace may crown his latter days; that he may live to see, and rejoice in the increasing prosperity of his country, and finally realize the blessedness promised to the faithful disciples of CHRIST.

WHEN we extend our views forward, to a successor in this high and honorable office, it is with much satisfaction that we observe the prevailing suffrages of the people pointing us to a CHARACTER,† in whom we can feel so strong confidence, that he will faithfully and uniformly endeavour to promote the true interest of this Commonwealth, in connexion, and consistency with that of the United States.

HIS Honor, the *Lieutenant Governor*,‡ will accept our congratulations, on the renewed testimony which he has received of the esteem and confidence of his fellow citizens. By still exerting himself to serve them, in that honorable station, to which their so general suffrages have called him, may he enhance their esteem and approbation, as well as the final rewards of fidelity.

MAY the *Honourable Senate*, and *House of Representatives*, in the elections of this day, and all their future deliberations and decisions, be actuated by the purest of motives; a regard to the honour of GOD, and the happiness

* His Excellency SAMUEL ADAMS, Esq.

† His Excellency INCREASE SUMNER, Esq.

‡ His Honor MOSES GILL, Esq.

happinefs of those who have placed confidence in their wisdom and integrity. We trust they will not forget the salutary influence of religion, on the welfare of civil society, nor the peculiar importance of the general diffusion of knowledge, in a Republic. We therefore anticipate their solicitous, and unremitted concern, not only for our University, and Academies, but for those smaller and more common seminaries of learning, on which our dependence, for the general diffemination of the most useful knowledge, and a great part of the benefit of public religious instruction, must ultimately rest. Happy will it be for the people, and happier still, in the end, for themselves, if they conscientiously pursue the way of well-doing : If, by their laws, their influence and example, they endeavour to discourage vice, and honour and promote that righteousness which exalteth a nation, while it lays the only sure foundation of happinefs to individuals, both temporal and eternal. For, if to the character of good rulers, they join that of good men, though they should not be able, at all times, to silence the ignorant and foolish, they will secure the approbation of the wise and candid ; and above all, they will be glorious in the eyes of the LORD.

THIS whole assembly is reminded of the obligation which lies upon them to do well, not merely by subjection to government, and giving honour, to all among their fellow-men, to whom honour is due, but by uniform submission to the will, and impartial respect to all the commandments of the SUPREME RULER of the world. Let us rejoice that we are called unto liberty, and that our submission to government is so rational a service. But let us take heed that we do not use our liber-

ty either civil or religious, as a cloke of maliciousness. Let us not show ourselves unworthy of the former, either by unreasonable and groundless complaints of our rulers on the one hand, or blind and servile confidence in them on the other: By neglecting or abusing the important privilege of election, which we so freely enjoy; nor by losing sight of the principles and spirit of those excellent constitutions of government, under which we live. And let us not abuse the latter, by injustice, fraud and falsehood; by luxury, intemperance and corrupting dissipation; nor by infidelity, profaneness, and contemptuous disregard of religious institutions. But duly appreciating the merits, both of the government and the religion with which we are blessed, let it be our great concern, to crown the virtues of the citizen with those of the christian: Thus firmly laying the foundation of joyful hope, that when the solemn period shall arrive which will level all distinctions, but those of the mortalkind, we may find a place among the just made perfect and with all those, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, have sought glory, honour, immortality, enter on the enjoyment of eternal life.

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